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REFORMIST MASOUD PEZESHKIAN WINS IRAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pezeshkian scored over other hardline candidates by promising to reach out to the West, ease enforcement on headscarf law

NEW LEADER COMES WITH NO EXPERIENCE

Pezeshkian secured 53.3% of the votes polled while his nearest hardline rival Saeed Jalili got 44.3%. Pezeshkian is a heart surgeon and a member of Parliament. He is considered inexperienced as he has never held any sensitive post before. After the victory, he tweeted, "The difficult path ahead will not be smooth except with your companionship, empathy, trust"

WILL NOT HAVE SWAY OVER FOREIGN POLICY

- Mostafa Khoshcheshm, a Tehran-based analyst, told *Al Jazeera* he was not expecting strategic changes to Iran's foreign policy, which is decided by the entire establishment, the supreme leader and the Parliament | P12
- PM Narendra Modi tweeted, "Looking forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our warm and long-standing bilateral relationship ..."

30m voters

THE LOWEST TURNOUT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL POLLS HISTORICALLY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

DECISION TIME

FM to present full-yr budget on July 23

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

FINANCE minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the government's first full year budget of Modi's third term on July 23 in Lok Sabha.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju tweeted on Saturday that the budget session of House will be held between July 22 and August 12.

Expectation about the budget are running high as President Droupadi Murmu in a joint address to Parliament said that it will be marked by many historic step, adding the budget will highlight major social and economic decisions. Only an interim budget was presented in February due to the Lok Sabha polls.

The first session of Parliament after the formation of 18th Lok Sabha was stormy with the Opposition, armed with more numbers in the Lower House, clashed with the government over a range of issues including NEET-UG examination paper leak.

NDA's key ally Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Modi on Thursday and sought the Centre's handholding to pull the state out of the financial black hole it was pushed into by the previous government.

Other important ally Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also wants special status for his state.

The finance minister has been taking inputs from industry leaders for the last few days for the budget.

The buzz in political circles is that the budget may focus on the rural population.

Starmer ready for FTA that works for both

Modi speaks to his new British counterpart, invites him to make an early visit to India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday spoke with his new British counterpart Keir Starmer, invited him to visit India, and suggested the early conclusion of a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that has been under negotiation for over two years.

"Pleased to speak with Keir Starmer. Congratulated him on being elected as the PM of UK. We remain committed to deepening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and robust India-UK economic ties for progress and prosperity of our peoples and global good," Modi said in a post on X. He also suggested that Starmer schedule an early visit to India.

Downing Street said Starmer returned the compliment by congratulated Modi on his third consecutive term as PM.

"Discussing the importance of the living bridge between the UK and India and the 2030 roadmap, the two leaders agreed that there was a wide range of areas across defence and security, critical and emerging technology and climate change for the two nations to deepen their cooperation," the Downing Street spokesperson said.

As for the FTA, Starmer said he stood ready to conclude a deal that "worked for both sides. The leaders hoped to meet at the earliest opportunity," the spokesperson said. Both sides have been working towards clinching the FTA since January 2022, when Boris Johnson was PM.

"Appreciating the positive contributions of the Indian community in the social, economic and political development of the UK, the two sides agreed to continue to promote close people to people ties," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

The Labour's manifesto had said: "We will seek a new strategic partnership with India, including an FTA, as well as deepening cooperation in areas like security, education, technology and climate change." New British Foreign Secretary David Lammy has said he wants to 'finish the job' on the FTA and plans to visit India within the first month of being elected.

Soft line on Kashmir

On Kashmir, Starmer said his party is committed to eliminating any extremist views that could strain UK-India relations. He also promised a stricter handling of anti-Hindu hate crimes in the UK. While visiting Swaminarayan Mandir in Kingsbury, he had said there was absolutely no place for Hinduphobia in Britain

Main accused gives up, Baba expresses grief over stampede

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

WHILE Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused of Hathras stampede, surrendered to the Delhi Police late on Friday night and was taken into custody by the UP Police, the self-styled godman Bhole Baba alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Suraj Pal, expressed grief over the tragedy at an event at his Satsang Sabha in Hathras.

Devprakash Madhukar

Four days after the stampede, the preacher on Saturday told a news agency he hoped strict action would be taken against the culprits.

Speaking from his Mainpuri Ashram, Bhole Baba urged the bereaved families to have faith in the judiciary. "I am deeply saddened. May God give us the strength to bear this pain. Please keep faith in the government and the administration. I have faith that anyone who created the chaos would not be spared," he said.

An FIR was lodged in the matter on July 2 under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. However, Bhole Baba was not named in the FIR.

Dev Prakash Madhukar, the *mukhya sevadar* of Bhole Baba, is the only accused named in the FIR. Hathras SP Nipun Agarwal said Madhukar was arrest from Delhi and brought to Hathras to be presented in court.

In a recorded message, Madhukar's lawyer A P Singh said that his client had surrendered in Delhi, where he was under treatment. "Today, we have made Madhukar, who has been called the main organiser in the FIR in the Hathras case, to surrender after calling the police."

K'taka records 1st suspected Zika death this year

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru/Shivamogga

A 74-year-old man died of suspected Zika virus infection in Shivamogga on Thursday. This is the first suspected death due to Zika virus infection in the state this year. However, the health department maintained that the Zika positive case is only an 'incidental finding' and the man died due to Multi-Organ Dysfunction Syndrome (MODS) and breathing difficulties.

The patient, who hailed from Gandhi Nagar in Shivamogga, was under treatment for cold, cough and fever from June 19. He tested positive for Zika virus on June 21.

According to a statement from the health department, the patient's WBC count dropped gradually and there were indications of secondary bacterial infections, including Sepsis, which resulted in MODS. He was discharged from a private hospital against medical advice on July 4 and died the same day.

Fever surveillance and source reduction measures have been taken up at Gandhi Nagar ward. No fresh fever cases have been reported. The situation is under control, the statement said.

ZIKA VS DENGUE

Zika and dengue are vector-borne diseases. However, dengue is considered more dangerous and fatal. With Zika, most people experience no symptoms or only mild ones like fever, rashes and joint pain.

EXPRESS INTAKE

Sisodia followers may hold rally to boost his image | P4

Reservoir levels below normal | P9

Soldier, 4 ultras killed in J&K encounters | P10

Fire personnel search for Hemanth (inset) who fell into a drain after ramming his bike into the road median in Bengaluru on Saturday | VINOD KUMAR T

Search on for biker who crashed into B'luru drain

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A 26-year-old biker, who fell into a stormwater drain after hitting a road divider near RR Nagar Gate on Friday, is yet to be traced. The victim has been identified as Hemanth, a porter, who hails from Bapuji Nagar.

A police officer told TNSE that the accident took place near RR Nagar Gate around 11 pm when Hemanth was returning from Jnanabharathi campus. After hitting the median, he fell into the four-foot wide stormwater drain.

A search was launched immediately after a passerby alerted the police. However, fire and rescue services personnel could only recover the bike. Hemanth's father works as an auto driver, while his mother is a government employee.

NEET-UG counselling by third week: Ministry

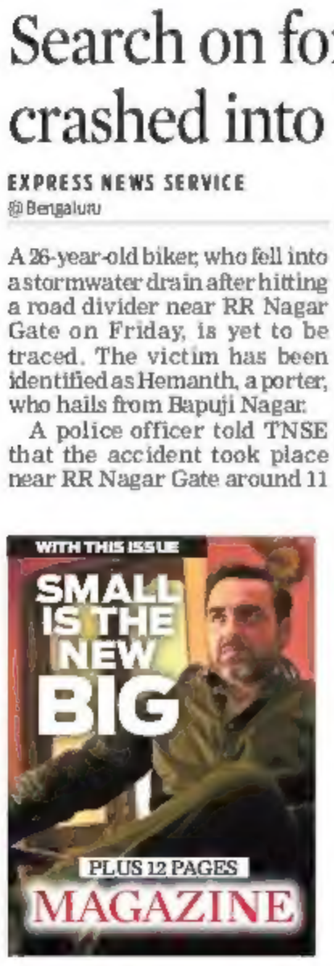
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

JULY 6 was a contentious date in all NEET-UG case hearings before vacation benches because that was when the National Testing Agency had told the Supreme Court it intended to start counselling for admission to medical courses.

The court had rejected all petitions demanding a stay on counselling till the case on the alleged malpractices in NEET-UG is disposed of. Even requests for a two-day stay till July 8, when a three-judge bench led by CJI D Y Chandrachud will begin hearing a batch of petitions demanding scrapping of the exam, were turned down.

July 6 came and went but the counselling didn't start. Turns out that it hasn't even been notified yet by the Medical Counselling Committee. The counselling schedule for NEET-UG and PG is announced by MCC, under the Directorate General of Health Services, after the completion of the exam process and the finalisation of the seat matrix by the National Medical Commission (NMC).

In 2021, 2022 and 2023, the counselling for UG seats commenced on 19/1/2022, 11/10/2022 and 20/7/2023, the ministry stated. For this year, NMC communicated its schedule for finalisation of the seat matrix for UG and PG seats in June last week, indicating it will finalise the UG seat matrix by July third week and PG seat matrix by mid-August. MCC will then notify the counselling schedule.



Somanna goofs up, mourns Advani

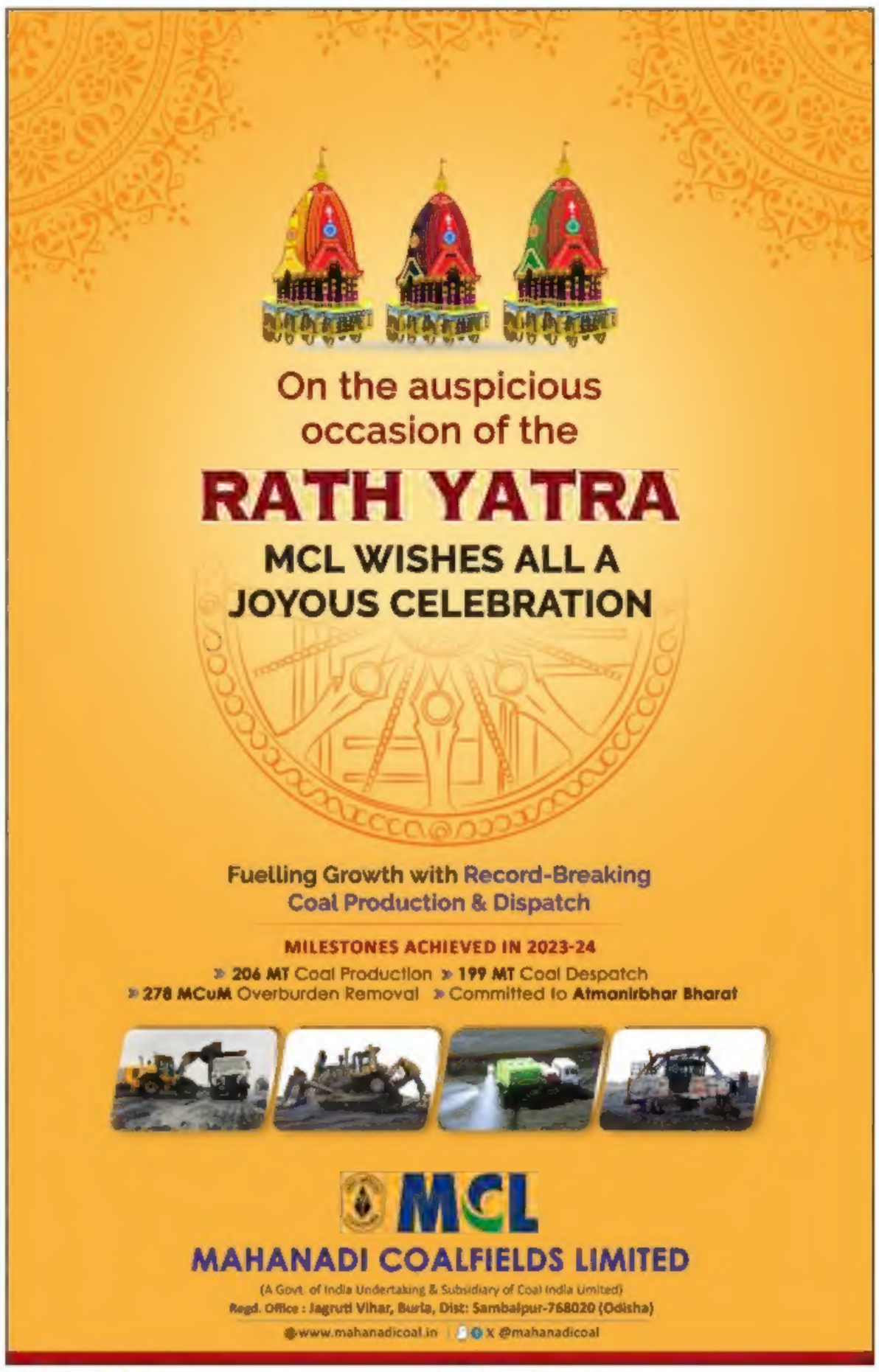
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Tumakuru

UNION Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti V Somanna on Saturday made a faux pas by paying tributes to BJP patriarch LK Advani at a public meeting at Gubbi near here.

"Our loving BJP leader LK Advani is no more," he announced at a BJP-JDS workers' meet. Somanna made this announcement after a local BJP leader informed him that Advani passed away.

Initially, Somanna got confused after hearing the news. Instead of getting it confirmed from his officials, Somanna went by the information given by BJP leaders. He, however, blamed it on BJP leader AN Lingappa. Later, when Somanna was informed that Advani was discharged from a hospital, he apologised for his faux pas.

Meanwhile, Bengaluru Rural MP Dr CN Manjunath reportedly mourned the death of Advani at Kunigal near here. Along with BJP-JDS workers, Manjunath observed silence for a few minutes. Later, he regretted the mistake and attributed it to some people spreading false news on social media.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